



Memorandum

TO: Historic Landmarks Commission**FROM:** Courtney Damkroger
Historic Preservation Officer**SUBJECT: PROPOSED CITY
LANDMARK NOMINATION
FOR THE WILDER-HAIT HOUSE (HL04-150)
1190 EMORY STREET****DATE:** February 20, 2004

APPROVED:**DATE:**

BACKGROUND

In January of 2004 the Wilder-Hait House located at 1190 Emory Street was evaluated in an updated Department of Parks and Recreation Form (DPR) and Historic Evaluation Sheet. The DPR (attached) stated that the building exceeded the qualification threshold for City Landmark status and would appear to be eligible for the National Register. Building owners Neil and Monica MacKinnon recently submitted an application for Historic Landmark designation of the residence using the research documented in the DPR.

The subject site is currently zoned R-1-8 Residence District, and designated Public Quasi Public (PQP) on the General Plan Land Use and Transportation Diagram.

ANALYSIS

The Department of Parks and Recreation Form (DPR523) completed by Franklin Maggi and Bonnie Montgomery in January of 2004 includes the following information. The residential building at 1190 Emory St. is initially associated with Francis Alfred Wilder, who was born on October 6, 1873, in Vallejo, California, the second of four children born to A. D. and Emma Wilder. Frank graduated from the University of California at Berkeley in 1896 and was an enthusiastic Cal alumni supporter until his death. Wilder started in his business career with the California Fruit Cannery Association (known later as Calpak, then Del Monte). By April 1905, he had left the company along with George Pratt and David Low to found the Pratt-Low Preserving Company. The three men built the cannery on 22 acres acquired from the Pacific Manufacturing Company at Bellomy St. and The Alameda near the Santa Clara railroad depot. The cannery would go on to become one of Santa Clara County's leading employers: a permanent work force of several hundred swelling to over 1000 employees during packing season. In 1920, Wilder was one of several local businessmen who organized a \$500,000 corporation for construction and initial operation of the Security Warehouse and Cold Storage Company on the former site of the Knox-Goodrich mansion in San Jose at North Second Street near Julian Street. The plant was designed for cold storage of fresh fruit, brine storage of eggs, and freezing of fruit and meat. Its first president was Elmer E. Chase, previously president of the nearby Golden Gate Packing Company, a cannery which had been adjacent to the railroad



line since 1877. Frank A. Wilder would hold dual vice presidencies at Pratt-Low and with the Security Warehouse and Cold Storage Company until his retirement in 1939. Frank Wilder joined San Jose's Sainte Claire Club in 1907 and was an early member of the San Jose Country Club. The Wilders' frequent travels abroad were regularly reported in the society page of the San Jose newspapers.

Wilder purchased the land on which this house would be built in separate transactions, purchasing the last piece of land on February 6, 1922, from J.B. and Gertrude Roberts. The Wilders and their two children, Frank A. Wilder and Ethel Clarke Wilder moved into their new home early in November 1923. The house was one of the grander residences among the many constructed during the building boom of 1923 and 1924 in the Santa Clara Valley. A John C. Gordon photograph of the Wilder home accompanied an article published in the Mercury Herald on December 19, 1923.

Located on a 1.12 acre urban lot just off The Alameda in the Rose Garden area of San Jose, this large, two-story single-family residence is situated in a neighborhood of distinguished homes built during the inter-war period as San Jose expanded its urban boundaries to encompass the unincorporated areas between the downtown and nearby Santa Clara. The house is one of the more distinctive examples of the modernistic implementation of the English Tudor revival style locally, the work of the architectural firm of Binder & Curtis who had established themselves as San Jose's most prominent firm by the 1920s. The L-shaped wood frame house is clad in stucco and faces Emory Street behind an expansive lawn area. The two-story portion of the building has a large, steeply pitched, cross-gable roof, with the eaves placed at mid-height of the second story to emphasize the dominant roof form. Centrally placed gables are located front and rear. The front gable protrudes and rises above the facade, and contains an oriel window above an entry alcove. The front door is original to the building: a custom slab with leaded glass insert and side-lites fitted to an arched form. The symmetry of the front facade is a counterpoint to the rich interplay of shapes found on the sides and rear of the building.

Although modern in its overall appearance, the building contains a wealth of details the architects articulated to associate it with its English roots. These include extensive use of multi-lite casement windows with large external metal hinges, stucco fencing designed to be integral to the house form and topped at the corners with stone balls, diamond pane leaded glass windows, and ornate scuppers under the eaves. Stucco fencing is located between the house and garage that is designed to be integral to the house form. Additional ornate concrete fencing is located along the front patios that is classical in design, common to estate homes built in Santa Clara Valley during the early parts of the twentieth century.

Although the house has been used for non-residential uses, it has retained a high level of integrity to its original design. The present owners have returned the property to its original use as a single-family residence, and have worked to return the interior building to its early residential character. Because the property is associated with persons important to our past, and the residence is a distinctive implementation of 1920s Tudor Revival architecture by the prominent local firm of Binder and Curtis, the property appears eligible for the National Register under Criteria B and C.

The Wilder-Hait House merits designation as a historic landmark based on its historical, cultural and architectural significance (see attached State form and Historic Evaluation Form). The building qualifies for landmark status based on the following criteria of the Historic Preservation Ordinance (Municipal Code Section 13.48.110):

3. Its identification with Francis Alfred Wilder and James M. Hait who significantly contributed to the local, regional, state or national culture and history; and
6. Its embodiment of distinguishing characteristics of the 1920's residential Tudor Revival architectural type or specimen; and
7. Its identification as the work of the architectural firm of Binder and Curtis whose individual work has influenced the development of the city of San Jose.

RECOMMENDATION

Planning staff recommends that the Historic Landmarks Commission forward a recommendation to the City Council to initiate proceedings to designate the Wilder-Hait House as a Historic Landmark.

Courtney Damkroger
Historic Preservation Officer

Attachment

- ? Photograph
- ? DPR form and City of San Jose Evaluation Sheet
- ? Map